



THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D. C.
20250-0100

MEMORANDUM

TO: USDA Employees

FROM: Secretary Mike Johanns

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Johanns", written over the "FROM:" line.

DATE: September 8, 2005

Thousands of USDA employees live and work in the area where Hurricane Katrina brought so much devastation. Many - likely most - have suffered some measure of damage to their homes; some are beyond repair. All are enduring terrible living conditions due to shortages and the loss of basic infrastructure. As you have heard, it will be many months before life returns to something resembling normalcy. Furthermore, hundreds are without work because many of the USDA facilities where they were employed are severely damaged or inaccessible.

Many employees have asked how they can help their Gulf Coast co-workers. On an official basis, USDA will soon launch two initiatives through which you can lend a hand:

1. Emergency Leave Transfer Program:

The President has authorized Departments and Agencies to set up a leave-sharing program with much broader application than the customary person-to-person arrangement. Currently, any employees who cannot work because their facility is out of commission and/or who suffered such personal damage that they cannot reasonably be expected to make it to work, are eligible to be placed on administrative leave by their agencies. I authorized administrative leave up to the end of pay-period 19 (October 1). At this time, we do not know if further administrative leave is in the offing. When the administrative leave opportunity goes away, employees still ill situated must expend their annual leave. We will soon announce the procedures under which employees can donate their annual leave to an undesignated pool, which then will be allocated to applicants who show a need.

2. Designating CFC Donations for the Relief of USDA Employees Affected by Katrina:

To provide USDA employees the opportunity to designate their CFC donations specifically to benefit other USDA employees affected by Katrina, arrangements are underway to establish a USDA employee hurricane relief fund in cooperation with the Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund (FEEA). The FEEA is a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation that provides educational benefits and

emergency assistance exclusively to civilian federal employees and their dependents. The fund derives virtually all of its operating revenue from federal employee contributions made through the CFC. USDA is drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the FEEA to establish a fund out of which grants or interest-free loans can be made to USDA employees seeking assistance. Because FEEA is a registered CFC charity, employees can designate their pledge forms with its four digit code – 1234 – and mark their forms with the words “FEEA Hurricane Fund for USDA Employees.” FEEA will account for the donations and administer the grant and loan programs.

CFC donations are not posted until January 2006. Employees wishing to donate to this fund quickly can do so directly by check or credit card. As soon as we have executed our MOU with FEEA and that organization has updated its Web site with the USDA fund, we will broadcast a follow-up e-mail alert to all employees about this more immediate opportunity.

Employees also may, of course, designate their CFC contributions for Hurricane Katrina victims through other charitable organizations.

We will keep you informed as other opportunities to help arise in the weeks to come.

Thank you for your support of your co-worker.